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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RIYADH 009531

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DHAHRAN SENDS  
PARIS FOR ZEYA, LONDON FOR TSOU  
STATE FOR NEA/PPD - CWHITTLESEY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/26/2015

TAGS: [SOCI](#) [KMPI](#) [SA](#)

SUBJECT: NEW PRIVATE UNIVERSITY IN THE EASTERN PROVINCE,  
OPENS FALL '06

REF: RIYADH 9469

Classified By: Acting Consul General Ramin Asgard for reasons 1.4 (b) a  
nd (d).

1. (U) Summary: A new private university in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province is scheduled to open to 600 men and women in the fall of 2006. Funded by donations from private investors, Prince Mohammed University's curriculum, faculty recruitment, and administrative system have been designed and will be implemented by Texas International Education Consortium (TIEC). With a maximum total enrollment of 5500 students planned for 2013, Prince Mohammed University will increase the educational options available to students in Saudi Arabia, and seems a good partner for USG educational exchange programs. End Summary.

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US CONSULTANT: "WE DESIGNED EVERYTHING EXCEPT THE BUILDINGS"  
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2. (U) Named after the governor of the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, Prince Mohammed bin Fahd, the university has the useful support of the government bureaucracy. The construction for Prince Mohammed University (PMU) will begin in early February 2006. Texas International Educational Consortium (TIEC) has been closely involved with the project for the past two years. TIEC is a non-profit educational consulting firm affiliated with 32 public universities in Texas. In early December 2005, the PMU working group extended their contractual agreement with TIEC for two more years to launch the university.

3. (U) "We designed everything except the buildings," said Nick Pouton, President and CEO of TIEC, on one his frequent visits to the Eastern Province. The language of instruction will be English, and the university will offer degree programs in business, engineering (for men), interior design (for women), information technology and computer science. All degree programs are designed based on research of Saudi Arabia's labor market needs.

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THE 5-YEAR UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE  
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4. (C) As with many English-language universities in Saudi Arabia, PMU will have a preparatory year of English and math in addition to the four-year educational program. Many universities, particularly elite ones, find this year necessary to compensate for the weak Saudi education system (reftel). In a December 20 meeting with the CG and consulate staff, Dr. Issa Alansari, the newly appointed president of PMU and long-time university administrator, said that students from Saudi public schools need the preparatory year.

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CITIZENS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY  
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5. (U) Dr. Issa Alansari underscored the emphasis that has been placed on creating a multicultural environment for students, fostering creative and critical thinking, group work, and respect and tolerance of others. PMU hopes to attract many international students, and Dr. AlanQri said that the Ministry of Higher Education has recently revised a regulation to allow private universities to have a student body of 25% international students. PMU is also interested in educational exchange programs. Both Dr. Alansari and Dr. Nassar M. Shaikh, Director for Academic Affairs were enthusiastic about cooperating with us on cultural and educational exchange programs.

6. (U) As the first private university in the EP, PMU is trying to compete with universities in Bahrain, Kuwait, and other Gulf countries. They hope that the cutting edge use of technology will attract students willing to pay the 40,000 SR

(10,700 USD) tuition.

17. (U) Comment: Saudi Arabia's higher education capacity has not kept pace with population growth. Every educational institution that conoffs have visited in the Eastern Province has thousands more applicants than they can admit. The opportunities available to women are particularly limited, as most EP institutions do not accept them at all. While expensive, PMU will offer a useful option for some students. End Comment.

(APPROVED: ASGARD)  
GFOELLER